

**REMARKS**

Claims 1, 3 and 4 are pending in this application, of which claims 1 has been amended, and claim 3 and 4 have been added.

Claim 1 was rejected under 35USC§103(a) as being unpatentable over Obermayer et al. (DE Patent No.3,841,203) in view of Prior et al. (US Patent No. 5,263,444).

Obermayer et al. does teach both joint surfaces of the case halves have seal grooves, but does not teach only one of the joint surfaces of the case halves has a seal groove. The sealing ring 6 is shown to be held in the receiving groove 5 of Obermayer et al. As shown in Fig. 4 of Obermayer et al., the sealing ring 6 has an end portion, which is fitted to a gasket 10 having a recessed or receptacle portion 12. Because the sealing ring 6 in Fig. 4 is shown to penetrate the receptacle portion 12, the gasket 10 having the receptacle portion 12 must be extended toward the direction perpendicular to the mating surface of the two crankcase parts 1', and 1'', so as to have a thickness or a diameter. Without the thickness or diameter of the receptacle portion 12, the gasket 10 having the receptacle 12 would not work. Because the end portion of the sealing ring 6 has the thickness or diameter of the receptacle portion 12, a groove has to be formed on both joint surfaces of the case halves of Obermayer et al. There is no teaching in Obermayer et al. that a recessed portion for entirely receiving the receptacle 12 is formed on only one of the crankcase parts.

Prior et al. also does not teach that only one of the joint surfaces of the case halves has a seal groove. As taught at col. 2, lines 46-49, Prior et al. teach that the longitudinal portions 32 of seals 30 are received in grooves 40 extending from recesses 28 and formed in the mating surface 14 and 16 of upper and lower crankcase members 10 and 12. That it, Prior et al. teach to form the seal grooves on both joint surfaces of the case halves.

Therefore, because neither of the references teaches to form the seal groove only on one of the joint surfaces of the case halves, nor that the enlarged recesses for entirely receiving the enlarged end portions of the bar-shaped seal member are provided only on the one of the first and second case halves, the present invention recited in claim 1 cannot be obtained even if combining Obermayer et al. with Prior et al. According to the present invention, the manufacturing process is simplified, resulting in reduction of the cost. Reconsideration of the rejection is respectfully requested.

Claim 3 has been added, whose basis is found at Fig. 7, showing that the groove 87 has a constant depth even at the portion receiving the enlarged end portion 86a of the seal member 86. Neither of the references teaches such features.

Claim 4 has been added, whose basis is found at Figs. 7 and 8, and the paragraph bridging pages 7 and 8 of the specification. Neither of the references teaches such features.

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Response dated April 9, 2004  
Reply to Office Action of December 11, 2003

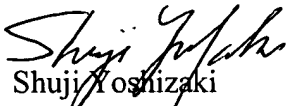
In view of the aforementioned amendments and accompanying remarks, claims 1, 3 and 4, as herein amended, are in condition for allowance. Applicants request such action at an early date.

If the Examiner believes that this application is not now in condition for allowance, the Examiner is requested to contact Applicants' undersigned agent at the telephone number indicated below to arrange for an interview to expedite the disposition of this case.

In the event that this paper is not timely filed, Applicants respectfully petition for an appropriate extension of time. The fees for such an extension or any other fees that may be due with respect to this paper may be charged to Deposit Account No. 50-2866.

Respectfully submitted,

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